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OUR VILLAGE

IN

WILMER COLLECT

WAR-TIME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
ALLAN CAMERON, ILVERTON RECTORY,  
ETC.



PUBLISHED BY THE  
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,  
150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

The incidents in the following narrative are real, and have actually occurred in the present struggle for our national life, though not precisely in the order here indicated. Liberty has been taken in locating and arranging them, and names and places are assumed.

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# CONTENTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

The Beach Hill neighborhood .....	7
-----------------------------------	---

## CHAPTER II.

The Soldiers' Aid Society .....	17
---------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III.

The departure of the regiment .....	35
-------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV.

The drummer-boy of the Twenty-sixth .....	50
---	----

## CHAPTER V.

How the boys came home .....	80
------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

Lights and shadows .....	102
--------------------------	-----



# OUR VILLAGE IN WAR-TIME.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE BEACH HILL NEIGHBORHOOD.

“WOULD you believe it, Mrs. Glenn, the Tyrrell House is sold, and a family is going to move into it right away? The painters and carpenters have been there for a week. I didn't know the house, it looked so lively. It seems too bad to have that place shut up from the public, for we all enjoyed it so much; but I suppose the owner had the best right to it, after all. I haven't found out who the family are, but I shall hear all about it to-morrow, and then I will let you know; for Aunt Prudence is going there to clean

the rooms, and get them ready for the furniture."

As Miss Letty paused to take breath, I expressed my interest in the news, which, to confess the truth, had affected me rather unpleasantly.

The Tyrrell House was the "show-place" of Beach Hill, a rambling, aristocratic mansion, built by a wealthy Englishman, who, after a series of domestic troubles, shut up the house in disgust, and left the country. It was his wish that no one should reside there; consequently the house was out of repair, and the extensive grounds, laid out originally by a landscape gardener, were overrun with weeds. Still it was a lovely spot, and the dwellers on the hill held annual picnics there, and lovers strolled through its shaded walks by moonlight, and altogether we had come to look upon it as public property, held for our special ben-

efit. Great was our astonishment, therefore, when we heard that the house had been purchased, and was fitting up for a family, who were to take immediate possession. It was felt by us almost as a personal loss; and woe to the new-comers, should they fail to atone by the charms of their society for the deprivation we were to suffer.

Not that we were an inhospitable or quarrelsome set of people. On the contrary, we prided ourselves on the possession of the opposite qualities. If there were in the town of Woodbury a model neighborhood, we believed it to be located on Beach Hill. Ours was a very select society, reckoning among its members the clergyman, lawyer, doctor, and editor of the town, and a number of gentlemen of wealth and leisure, as well as some who led the dubious sort of existence called "living by one's wits." We

assumed, however, no airs of superiority over our townsmen, but were content to manifest our self-complacency by a quietly patronizing manner whenever we met them. In such a community as this, it may be supposed the arrival of a new family was quite an event, particularly as they were about to occupy the best house in the town.

The next day I was very busy at home, and had forgotten the coming event, when just at evening Miss Letty made her appearance, every line of her face instinct with news which her tongue was eager to communicate.

Miss Letty Brown was the dressmaker *par excellence* of the town of Woodbury; and though we of the Hill had tried hard to appropriate her, it was found an impossibility, so we were fain to share her services with the inhabitants of the village. She was a cheerful, active little

woman, of an uncertain age, with a fresh, breezy atmosphere always about her, which stirred one very pleasantly—a little given to gossip, yet no scandal-monger, but a sincere, earnest Christian, loving God and her fellow-men, and looking persistently on the bright side of every thing. No matter how dark the day, Miss Letty firmly believed in the sunshine behind the clouds, and waited for it to break through. Her services were in constant requisition on every occasion; and as she was brimming over with what the Yankees call “faculty,” nothing that skill and ingenuity could accomplish came amiss to her.

Hardly was the neat white sun-bonnet laid aside, when she exclaimed,

“Well, it’s really wonderful how things do come about in this world. There’s old Mr. Tyrrell thought he’d cut off his daughter with a shilling, and now her

grandson has come into possession of the house and land."

"How is that?" I asked; "is this new family connected with the Tyrrells?"

"Oh yes; Aunt Prudence has told me all about it. Mr. Fenton, the gentleman who has bought the property, is the grandson of Emily Tyrrell that was, and he has lived in Alabama a great many years. It seems he is a strong Union man; and when this rebellion broke out, he got into trouble, and has been all this time trying to get away; and now the family have come, but he stays behind to try and save some more of his money. Mrs. Fenton is very sick, and has been for a great while; but there is a grown-up daughter and another young lady, a niece, who is said to be an heiress, and a son, who I rather think is in the rebel army, though there is n't much said about it."



“Are the family coming immediately?” I inquired, for Miss Letty’s account had awakened my interest in these refugees from rebel tyranny.

“They are expected every day, but I’m sure the house is any thing but ready for them. When I heard about the poor sick lady, I felt like taking right hold and putting things to rights; but it would not have been taken kindly by Aunt Prudence, so I held my tongue. Mrs. Ryder and Mabel were there, seeing to the furniture and pictures, for it seems that when Mr. Ryder went south for his health, three years ago, he got acquainted with this family, and that is the way they found out that the house was for sale and got it. There was quite a company of Beach Hill people there, and among the rest Robert Lester, the fine-looking young lawyer. I do n’t often take a fancy to young men—you need n’t smile,

Nellie—but I do like that young man wonderfully. There's something so noble about him; and yet he's as gentle as a woman."

I assented cordially to Miss Letty's praise of the young lawyer, for he had been a favorite of mine from his first appearance in our town. He was alone in the world, having no relatives but one sister, who was at a boarding-school at some distance from Woodbury. His legal knowledge and splendid powers as a speaker made him a marked man in the community, and he was rising rapidly in his profession, while his private character, so pure and manly, won the esteem and friendship of all.

Unlike too many young men, Mr. Lester had not been ashamed to avow himself a Christian by a public profession of his faith in Jesus; and young as he was, Mr. Ryder had found him an efficient

helper in every good word and work, while even infidels and scoffers were compelled to admire his consistency and firmness of principle.

When the war broke out, and with thousands of others the young men of our village sprang to arms, we expected Robert Lester would be one of the first to go, for all knew his patriotic devotion to the cause of liberty; but to our surprise he did not enlist, though he looked sad enough when the first company marched away, carrying with them our best wishes and prayers for their success. He was not a man whom one would like to question about his reasons for any course of conduct, so we waited to hear what he would say, but he said nothing.

The second company went, and still no word from him, though his efforts to promote the good cause were laborious and incessant. There was some mystery

about it, for when urged to accept the command of a company, he replied hastily,

“Do not ask it. I would give ten of the best years of my life to be able to say yes, but I cannot go. I can help to send others, however, and that I am doing with all my heart.”

In fact his purse was always open, and as his fortune was large, the streams of his benevolence flowed in various channels, making glad many a heart which the war had made desolate.

Mr. Ryder our excellent minister, Dr. Goodhue our physician, and Mr. Reed, a thin, pale young man, who edited the Woodbury Chronicle, were all of opinion that Mr. Lester had good reasons for staying at home, and the rest of us were satisfied to adopt their belief, though we felt that he had lost a glorious opportunity of becoming a hero.

Before leaving, Miss Letty informed

me in confidence that the new family were to be invited to the meeting of the Soldiers' Aid Society at Mrs. Atlee's, and that then we should know whether they sympathized with the government, or were at heart secessionists.

"Not that I think there's any doubt about it," she said; "for if they had liked the rebellion, they could have staid there, you know. But it's always best to have things clear, and it's hard to satisfy some people."

This was a fact which could not be denied, even in our neighborhood, and I contented myself with inquiring if any one besides Mr. Ryder had seen the Fentons.

"I don't know, but I had my thoughts about it, when I saw Mr. Lester looking so sharp at the portraits of the family which are hung up. There was one of a young girl, the prettiest thing I ever set

eyes on ; it was so beautiful it spoilt all the rest. Her eyes were just like stars, and such lovely curls of brown hair falling over her white neck and shoulders ; but the sweet look on her face was better than all. I'm sure I should love that girl, and I guess Mr. Lester thought so too, from the way he kept going back to it again and again, as if he couldn't get away, looking all the while so melancholy. One thing I'm sure of," added Miss Letty as she rose to go ; "that young man hasn't got any thing to be ashamed of ; for if ever there was an honest and brave soul looking out through a face, his is the one, and I'd trust him with the last cent I had in the world."

With this emphatic declaration Miss Letty took her leave, and the last I saw of the white sun-bonnet, it was disappearing among the shrubbery at the parsonage.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SOLDIERS' AID SOCIETY.

THE new-comers were at length settled in their pleasant home. The neighbors had all called, and were received with a courtesy and kindness which won golden opinions from every one.

Mrs. Fenton was a confirmed invalid, never leaving her apartment; but the peace of God, which like a river flowed through her soul, filled the room with sunshine. In early life she had been a proud, ambitious woman, valuing wealth and social distinction above all things else, and anxious only that her children should shine in the circles of fashion to which she belonged. But in the midst of her career the hand of God was laid upon her, and in the solitude of a sick-room she was



forced to think. Through the prayers and efforts of a faithful Christian friend she was brought to look to Jesus for pardoning and healing mercy, and after a season of deep mental anguish, during which all the waves and billows of divine wrath seemed rolling over her, she found refuge at last at the foot of the cross, and was enabled to say from the heart, "I know in whom I have believed."

For ten years since that hour she had been confined to her couch with a hopeless disease, often racked with intense agony, yet always the same patient, uncomplaining sufferer, always calm and happy, with a heart full of love and pity for every form of human sorrow. By her household she was looked upon as a guardian spirit, rather than a helpless dependent. Every disputed question was referred to her decision, and whatever storms invaded the domestic circle,



“mother’s room” was always a place of refuge, which seemed to her children the dearest spot on earth.

Elinor Fenton the daughter was a delicate, graceful girl, inheriting her mother’s gentleness and refinement, but with the shadow of a deep sorrow always visible on her sweet face. That there was a son we knew, but nothing was ever said of him, and we could easily believe that his desertion of the Union cause, the uncertainty of her father’s fate, and the illness of her mother, must exert a depressing influence on one so young, even before we heard the saddest part of her story. The wealth of her affections had been bestowed on one who seemed fully worthy of them, but when the day of trial came he was found wanting. He was one of the first to enter the rebel army, and his influence over young Fenton had led the latter to adopt the same course.

Thus doubly bereft of lover and brother, the young girl devoted herself to her suffering mother ; but her heart was open as the day "to melting charity," and none ever appealed to her in vain for sympathy or relief.

When I first went to the house, I saw only Mrs. Fenton and Elinor, but my interest in both was so much excited that the call was soon repeated, and on my second visit Mrs. Fenton said to her daughter,

"Elinor, where is your cousin? Go, my love, and tell Lilian I wish to see her here."

Elinor left the room, and soon returned, accompanied by a young girl whom she introduced as Miss Grey, and in whom I recognized the original of the pleasing portrait I had seen. She was indeed most attractive in face and person ; bright, sparkling, and intellectual,

with a world of thought and feeling in her full hazel eye, shaded by long silken lashes, and an equal amount of firmness and energy indicated by the finely moulded mouth and chin.

After paying her respects to me as a stranger, she seated herself on an ottoman by the side of the couch, and taking one thin, white hand of the invalid, laid her cheek on it in a caressing way, which was evidently the expression of a tender and loving nature.

“And what has my Lilian been about all the morning,” said Mrs. Fenton, “that I have seen nothing of her before?”

“Oh, dear aunt, I have been very busy, I assure you. Venus wanted me in the kitchen a while, for she was afraid her preserves were in danger of spoiling. Then I gave little Pete his daily lesson; and last, not least, had to prepare some work to take to the society to-morrow.”

“Then you are going to our meeting?” I said; “I am very glad to hear that, for somehow I feared we should not have the pleasure of seeing you young ladies there.”

“You do not know our Lilian,” said her aunt fondly, “or you would have no doubts on such a subject. She is a perfect enthusiast in the Union cause, and I am afraid she has almost wished herself capable of bearing arms in its defence. However that may be, she honors a soldier with all her heart, and would gladly devote herself in any way to do him good. As for my Elinor,” she added, turning with a smile to her daughter, “she is no less loyal than her cousin, though not quite so demonstrative” naturally, and tied to a sick mother who can hardly live without her. But you will see them both to-morrow, for the cause is dear to us all.”

When I left the house, Lilian Grey accompanied me to the door, and taking my hand, said with a frankness that was very captivating,

“Mrs. Glenn, my aunt has taken a great fancy to you; and if there were no other reason, we should love you for that. Now I want to ask as a great favor, that you will take Elinor and myself under your wing to-morrow, for we cannot help dreading the battery of eyes and tongues that we must encounter. I dare say you are no worse here than other people, and perhaps a great deal better, but as Venus says, ‘There’s no accounting for human nature,’ and strangers usually have to run the gauntlet in order to gain the freedom of any country town.”

I kissed the fair cheek that was glowing like a rose, and promised my best services on the morrow.

There was a very full meeting of the

Soldiers' Aid Society, for it was hoped that the strangers would attend, and all were anxious to meet them. I went early, and found Mrs. Ryder, our president, and Miss Letty Brown busied in cutting and fitting garments; while in the two rooms needles and tongues were equally active.

It was not long before Miss Fenton and her cousin came in, for they had none of that petty pride which leads its possessor to despise punctuality as a vulgar virtue. They were both more plainly dressed than most of the young ladies present; but though simple and unaffected in manner, there was an innate dignity and refinement about them which effectually repelled impertinence, and disappointed a few who were prepared, in their own elegant phraseology, "to find out all about them." There was one woman, however, who was not to be foiled in this determination.

Mrs. Flint was the widow of a worthy man, who is said to have been worried out of existence by his disconsolate partner, and none who knew her could question the probability of such a catastrophe. Her manner was always deprecating; her step, true to her nature, was soft and stealthy, and her voice carefully modulated to express only amiability; but there was a rigidity about the thin lips and a sharp glitter in the cold blue eye which told quite another story.

Greatly to the annoyance of our good pastor and his wife, Mrs. Flint arrogated to herself the office of adviser in all matters relating to the church; and as she could talk fluently, and call up tears from some hidden fountain on all proper occasions, some ignorant people looked on her as quite a saint, while those who knew her best regarded her as a scheming, dangerous woman, the female counterpart of



Bunyan's Talkative. She had exerted herself to the utmost to get the management of the Society, and especially of its funds, into her own hands; and failing in this, had left us in disgust, and for months had not attended our meetings, until brought out by curiosity on the present occasion.

Mabel Ryder had drawn Elinor away into a circle of young ladies; but Lilian, who had been consulting Miss Letty about her work, was sitting alone, and to her Mrs. Flint cautiously made her way. After a few commonplace remarks, she said in her softest tone, "I am very happy to see you here, of course, but I hardly expected that you Southerners would be willing to help us fight against your own brethren."

"I don't know," was the spirited reply, "whom you mean by my brethren. I am an American, and love my whole



country and the dear old flag better than my life. There is as much Northern blood in my veins as Southern, and if it were not so, I should feel just as I do now. No one could be any thing to me who wished to break up and destroy the best government ever formed by man. I never see a soldier who has fought for his country without feeling as if I wished to speak to him as a friend; and I count it an honor to do any thing, no matter how humble, that can add to his comfort."

The dark eyes flashed and the red lips trembled with the earnestness of her feelings; and any one but Mrs. Flint would have retired from the field; but she only answered with perfect coolness,

"I admire your patriotism, but when we think what a terrible thing war is, and how many precious lives are thrown away, we cannot help being willing to do any thing for peace."

“I do not consider war as the worst of all evils,” replied Lilian, “dreadful as it is. There are times in the history of all nations, when liberty can only be preserved by fighting for it, and I believe God hates a guilty peace, even more than the desolations of war. Storms are very useful and salutary things,” she added with a smile, “though they often make sad havoc of property and life. None can mourn more than I do the loss of the glorious dead, who have fallen in the cause of freedom; but it is far better to die so than to live cowards or traitors.”

Clearly there was nothing to be made out of Lilian Grey, and Mrs. Flint looked about for Elinor; but Mabel Ryder was on her guard, and gave no opportunity for an attack in that direction. So our Beach Hill diplomat was silent for a time, but during the afternoon I heard her in discussion with Miss Letty on

some subject which seemed to interest the latter very deeply. I only caught the conclusion of Mrs. Flint's remarks. "Such things seem to me very singular, to say the least."

"Well, I'm very thankful that I haven't the faculty of seeing singular things that some folks seem to have. I always thought that this was a land of liberty, and that men could go into the army and fight, or stay at home and help others to go, just as they thought right, without being called to an account for it. Mr. Lester is able to take care of himself, and does n't need my help ; but I hate this mousing round after characters, just as if they were bits of cheese."

"But you must acknowledge," answered the purring voice again, "that there's a mystery about this young man, and that is always against any one."

"Fiddlesticks on your mystery. I

sha'n't acknowledge any such thing. In the first place, I don't call every thing a mystery that I can't see through; for if I did, there 'd be no end of mysteries, seeing I can understand but very little. In the next place, supposing there is a mystery, it may be a good one; for I suppose there can be good mysteries as well as bad ones in this world."

"I have been told on very good authority," persisted Mrs. Flint, "that Mr. Lester has been much at the South, and he may have his own private reasons for not wishing to fight the rebels."

"And if he has," replied Miss Letty, "I dare say they are honorable ones, and if they satisfy him, I don't see what business 't is of ours. When I get a person marked down in my book as pure gold, I a'n't always going over them with a magnifying-glass to see if I can't find a flaw somewhere. If there are things

about them I do n't understand, I take it for granted they 're of a piece with those that I do understand, and so it never troubles me a bit."

"I know he is a great favorite of yours, and you can't see any faults in him ; but for my part, I never had clear evidence of his being a Christian."

"And pray, what kind of evidence do you want?" inquired Miss Letty, with more asperity of tone than I had ever heard from her before. "If humbly trusting in Christ, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and taking care of widows and orphans, is n't religion, what is? Mr. Lester is always on hand when any thing good is going forward in the church, though he does n't pray at the corners of the streets, like the Pharisees, nor say to everybody, by his looks and actions, 'See how good I am.' I think though, that he follows his Master a great deal nearer than some

who try to make out that their little tallow dip is a splendid Drummond light. But bless me, Mrs. Flint, you're sewing that sleeve in wrong-side out. It wont do to talk about our neighbors and sew for the soldiers at the same time."

With this home-thrust Miss Letty left the room, while we all inwardly rejoiced that Mrs. Flint had been silenced by one whom she regarded as so greatly her inferior.

After tea all work was laid aside, and the gentlemen one after another came in, until the rooms were filled, and the evening was spent in social enjoyment. It was remarked by all that Robert Lester and Miss Grey did not meet as strangers, though there was evident constraint in the manner of both. Lilian changed color, and seemed about to retreat when he approached her; and on his part, though remarkable for his power of self-

control, there was something in his appearance none had ever seen before. They had evidently known each other previously, and met now on a different footing from that of mere acquaintance. A dozen pair of eyes were upon them, and the situation was becoming embarrassing enough, when Elinor Fenton came to the rescue of her cousin, and entering into conversation with Mr. Lester, drew attention from Lilian, who took refuge among a group of young persons surrounding the piano.

When the company were about to separate, I chanced to be in the dressing-room, when as Lilian entered the hall I heard Mr. Lester say to her,

“Lilian, will you not allow me to accompany you home?”

“Certainly not,” was the hasty reply; “my aunt has sent the carriage for us, and I prefer riding with Elinor.”

“Permit me at least to see you to the carriage,” he said almost humbly, and I felt hurt at her cold rejection of his offer.

“There is no necessity for it,” she said. “Pete is here, and he is accustomed to the duty.”

What could this mean? Of all the young men I had ever known, I should have selected Robert Lester as the one best fitted to win the heart of such a young lady as Lilian; yet she shunned him and repelled his attentions. My thoughts were painfully occupied with the subject as I returned home, and in my dreams that night the two were strangely blended, though always with some invisible barrier between them, which I sought in vain to discover and remove.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE DEPARTURE OF THE REGIMENT.

FORTS Donalson and Henry had been taken by our brave soldiers and seamen, and the nation was in a fever of excitement and joy. But recruits were wanted to fill up the wasted armies in the various departments, and the work of enlistment went rapidly on among the young men of our neighborhood, while mothers, wives, and daughters worked day and night to fit out the beloved ones who were so soon to leave us for the seat of war.

Lilian Grey was one of the foremost in this noble work, and four of the soldiers in company A of the 26th were selected and sent out by her, with a bounty of three hundred dollars each, to fight for

the cause she loved so well. The shadow on Elinor's fair brow deepened day by day, as news came of terrible battles in which soldiers on both sides fell by thousands; and even Mrs. Fenton's faith was sorely tried by the continued absence of her husband, from whom no word had ever reached her.

Those were sad, sad days, and every heart felt the oppression as the hour of parting drew near. True, "the battle of the warrior, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," came to us softened by distance, but many that we loved were there in the thickest of the fight, and others were going whom we might see no more on earth. But it was no time for outward expressions of sorrow, so we resolutely forced back our tears, and smiled on our brave boys and encouraged them with words of comfort and cheer, when our hearts were dying

within us as we thought of the dangers to which they were to be exposed.

It was expected by all, that on this occasion Robert Lester would be one of the first to offer himself to his country, and a commission as lieutenant-colonel was actually made out and sent him by the governor, with the flattering request that he would not refuse it. But his answer was the same as before.

"If I could go at all," he said to his friends, "it would be as a private soldier; but it avails not to speak of it; my duty lies at home."

Lilian shunned him more resolutely than ever, and once said in his hearing, "If I were a man, and refused to go when my country called for my services, I should expect to be driven from society, as unworthy the love of woman or the esteem of my fellow-men."

"You are too severe, Lilian," said the

gentle Elinor ; “there are many other ways of serving one’s country besides fighting for it, and every one can judge best for himself what his duty may be.”

There was a look of intense pain in the face of the young man as Lilian spoke, but he drew himself up to his full height, and the fire in his eye told all who looked upon him that whatever the cause might be, it was not lack of courage which kept him at home.

“A thousand blessings on you, Miss Fenton,” he said in a low voice to Elinor soon afterwards. “Your kind heart hesitates to condemn even where it dares not approve. You can never know how much good your words have done me, suffering as I have from misunderstanding on every side.”

“You must pardon dear Lilian,” she answered in the same tone ; “she feels

very strongly, and your decision has been a severe disappointment to her."

"Miss Grey can never need any one to plead her cause with me," he said as he turned to leave the room.

A few days before the departure of the regiment Miss Letty came to my house, her face beaming with smiles, and to my inquiry what had happened, she answered,

"So much has happened, I don't know where to begin to tell you. In the first place, Mr. Fenton has got home with the rest of his money; but such a time as he has had to get it. Why, the adventures of Sinbad the sailor were nothing to the escapes he has had and the troubles he has been in. I don't think he is much to speak of, compared with the rest; but that isn't what I am thinking about. The best of all is, that it has come out why Robert Lester could n't enlist before, and now he has joined the company

as a private soldier; but, my word for it, he wont be one long."

"Are you at liberty to state the reason?" I inquired.

"Oh, certainly. It seems that the rich old uncle who left him his fortune, made a condition in his will, that if Robert died without heirs, the property was to go to another cousin, one Dick Satterlee, who is a flaming rebel. Our Mr. Lester knew that if he was killed, all that mint of money would go right into the hands of the Confederate government, to help on the rebellion. So he thought he could do more for the Union cause with the money, than by carrying a musket and getting shot himself. Besides, his poor little sister would be left without any friends, and poor to boot; so he just made up his mind to stand it out, and let everybody misjudge him if they would.

“Last week he saw in the list of killed in some battle, the name of his cousin Richard Satterlee; so he went right on to find out all about it. The body hadn’t been discovered, but everybody said he was dead. When Mr. Lester came back, he waited long enough to make his will, and then enlisted; and a happy looking man he was, I can tell you.

“But that is n’t all. He was once engaged to Miss Lilian Grey; but she was so angry with him because he didn’t go into the army, that every thing was broken off between them, though she loves him as she does her life, and he thinks full as much of her. But of course it will all be made up now, and I’m glad of it, for they are just exactly suited to each other.”

When I had expressed my surprise and pleasure at the good news brought by Miss Letty, I inquired what she in-

tended to do about little Willie, the son of a deceased sister, to whom she had been a second mother from his infancy.

“Well, there’s no help for it, I suppose,” she answered, while a cloud flitted over her bright face; “he is bound to go as a drummer-boy with the regiment, and I can’t persuade him to stay at home willingly, though he says he won’t go without my consent. It’s well his poor mother isn’t living, for her heart would break to have him go, such a baby as he is, only twelve years old. But I must say for him, he’s the best boy I ever saw, and the men all love him so, he’ll be well taken care of, if he doesn’t get killed. It’s hard for me; but I’ve got nothing else to give, and though it’s like taking the heart out of my body, I’ll try to do it cheerfully.”

Miss Letty was sewing at the Tyrrell



House when she learned from Mr. Ryder the facts in relation to Robert Lester, and no time was lost by her in communicating them to the family. Mrs. Fenton and Elinor heard with thankfulness that his fame was publicly cleared, though they had never doubted that it would be so in the end.

But to the ardent and enthusiastic Lilián, by whom he had been so bitterly condemned, the news was like a reprieve from death. She threw her arms round Miss Letty's neck, exclaiming,

"Oh, you are the best and dearest Miss Letty in the whole world. I didn't think any thing could have made me so happy."

"Lilian, dear, you forget," said her aunt in her gentle tone.

"No, aunt, I forget nothing," Lilian replied, while her eyes shone through tears like stars. "I know we are sepa-

rated by my own rash act, and I shall honor him only the more if he refuse again to see me ; but I am glad and proud to know that he is worthy of my love, or that of any other woman."

The days fled rapidly, and still Mr. Lester did not call on his former friends the Fentons, and as Lilian went out much less than usual, they seldom met. He was unwilling to try to exonerate himself from a suspicion which he felt to be unreasonable and degrading, or to sue for a return of the love he had never forfeited ; and Lilian, though she would gladly have humbled herself at his feet for having doubted his honor and loyalty, would not take the first step, lest her motives should be misconstrued.

Things were in this state when, on the evening before the departure of the regiment, a note from Elinor Fenton was received by the young soldier, which

brought him quickly to her side. A few words of explanation passed between them, and then he was ushered into the library, where Lilian was busy in preparing packages of stationery for the knapsacks that were scattered about.

That interview was one never to be forgotten by either of the parties. There were confessions to be made on both sides, and mutual forgiveness to be exchanged; for while Lester felt that he should have intrusted to the woman he loved the true reasons for his conduct, Lilian insisted that, knowing him as she did, she ought never to have doubted his loyalty under any circumstances. They parted, pledged to each other, and Lilian accepted as a sacred legacy the charge of Fanny Lester, in case of a contingency which her heart refused to contemplate.

The dreaded morning came at last,

when our brave boys were to exchange the comforts and endearments of home, for the hardships of the camp and the horrors of the battle-field. But a solemn ceremony remained to be performed before they went, and with one accord the steps of all were turned towards the parsonage. There, in the pleasant front yard, under the shadow of the tall elms that had sheltered her childhood, Mabel Ryder gave her hand to one whom she had loved ever since she could remember any thing. Thomas Wiley, first lieutenant of company A, was a young merchant, and had been a pupil of Mr. Ryder, who saw with pleasure the attachment existing between the young man and his darling child, for he knew him to be one calculated in every way to make her happy. When he joined the regiment, Mabel gave a tearful but willing consent, but with his urgent sollicita-

tion that she should become his wife before they went, she would not at first comply, the time was so short and the proposition so unexpected; but when he brought forward the plea, that as his wife she could with more propriety come to him if wounded or sick, she yielded. The privilege of attending him in sickness or suffering was so precious, that she could not lightly relinquish it; so it was fixed that the marriage should take place on the morning of their departure.

It was a beautiful picture, that wedding party under the trees, and one not soon to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The fair young bride, dressed in simple white, with smiles and tears contending for the mastery on her cheek, with her bridesmaids, Elinor and Lilian; the happy groom in his becoming uniform, supported by Robert Lester and the second lieutenant of his company;

the groups of friends scattered about, and outside of all the boys of the Twenty-sixth looking on with the deepest interest, as the pastor and father pronounced with trembling voice the words that gave his child to the keeping of another—all this is engraven on my memory, and can never be erased.

The ceremony was over, and as the regiment wheeled into line, the bridegroom with one long, silent embrace consigned Mabel to the care of her friends and took his place in the ranks. All the stores were closed and business suspended, as the Twenty-sixth marched for the last time, with unbroken columns, through our streets. The regiment was raised in the immediate vicinity, and many of its members were personally known to us; but at such a moment all seemed like sons and brothers. We were proud of their soldierly bearing, of their firm and

measured tread, of the precision with which their evolutions were performed, and the intelligence that lighted up every face. What eager eyes looked out from the ranks, to catch the last glimpse of mother, sister, wife, or sweetheart, as, amid the waving of handkerchiefs, half-uttered blessings, and stifled sobs, we bade them perhaps a final good-by. They left us full of hope and energy, with all the courage and strength of young manhood nerving each arm and animating each heart. How would they come back?

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE DRUMMER-BOY OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

AFTER the departure of the regiment there came to us a season of languor and depression. We had been in a state of unnatural excitement for weeks, and the reaction was inevitable. But for the letters received regularly from our absent boys, and which were read and talked over by all, and the Society meetings, where we came together to pray and work for the soldiers, I think we should have experienced a social stagnation.

Lilian Grey, now more than ever our "sunbeam," as we loved to call her, was out of town for a few weeks, and as Elinor seldom left her mother, who was suffering more than usual, we saw very lit-



tle of our neighbors in the Tyrrell House. Mr. Fenton seemed a moody, disappointed man, soured by a sense of injustice which he had no power to punish and no inclination to forgive.

Even Miss Letty, who had always seemed to possess an unfailing fountain of cheerfulness and hope, now wore at times a clouded brow when no tidings came from Willie, or the news from the front was unusually warlike. She was cheered, however, by continued reports of Willie's good conduct and popularity with the regiment, whose pet he had been from the first. Of his courage there could be no question, for he had been in several severe engagements, and boy as he was, had stood unflinchingly by the side of the bravest.

On one occasion, at the close of a hard fought skirmish, when a furious charge of the enemy's cavalry had driven back

his regiment, a division commander riding over the spot soon after, found Willie beating a tattoo on his drum as coolly as if he had been on parade.

"What are you doing here, my little fellow?" said the general.

"You see, sir," he replied, giving the military salute, "I did n't know but some of our boys might be about, and I thought I'd let them know there was a drummer here, in case they wanted to form again."

"But what if the enemy should return, and find you here alone?"

"If they should, sir, this is my place, and I'd rather they'd find me here than skulking, any way."

"Here's an unfledged hero for you," was the exclamation of the general as he rode on; and the next day Willie was called out and publicly thanked by the commander in the presence of all the troops. "It was an instance of bravery

which would have done honor to a veteran." Such were the words of the general, and a happy woman was his aunt as she read them in a letter written by Robert Lester on the occasion.

Then came to us the news of the invasion of Maryland by the rebels, and in a few days the battle of Antietam flashed over the wires, and with others we exulted in the victory, little thinking how deeply it was to affect us, for we supposed the Twenty-sixth to be in a division at some distance from the seat of war.

But a few days served to undeceive us; and then, as the "terrible list" of killed and wounded was read with dimming eyes and blanched cheeks, we learned how fearful was the loss our own troops had sustained. Robert Lester, who had risen rapidly from the ranks, and had been made captain on the field at Williamsburg, was wounded, it was

thought, mortally. Our dear little Willie had lost an arm, and Lieut. Wiley, the bridegroom of an hour, had fallen gloriously at the head of his company, while cheering them on. Many others whom we knew and loved had also died on the field, rendered immortal by their bravery.

In the evening of the day on which the news reached us, I went to the parsonage, and found our good clergyman preparing to start for Maryland to look after our wounded, and to bring home the body of Lieut. Wiley. Poor Mabel had been overwhelmed by the sad intelligence, and as her mother was wholly occupied with the heart-broken girl, there was no one to assist Mr. Ryder; but Miss Letty came in soon after me, and she was a host in herself. She was very pale, but cheerful and efficient as ever, thinking of everybody and every thing,

and bringing order out of confusion by the magic of her touch. When I expressed the hope that she would remain at the parsonage with Mrs. Ryder and Mabel, she answered,

“Bless you, dear, you don’t suppose I could stay here, and little Willie lying with an arm cut off at Hagerstown; do you? There is nobody can do for him as I can, who am like a mother to him; and if they could, I shouldn’t be willing to have them. No, no, I am going to start to-night with Mr. Ryder, and I shall count the minutes till we get there.”

“But have you no preparations to make for yourself for such a journey?” I inquired.

“Oh, my preparations were all made hours ago, as soon as I heard the news. I have put up every thing I shall be likely to want for my boy; and as for myself, I am always ready, you know.

There is nothing to be done but to fix up Mr. Ryder and be off. Miss Lilian and poor Fanny Lester are going with us, to see the captain, if he's alive; and who knows but their going may save his life, if he isn't dead when they get there. Some folks will blame Miss Lilian for going; but Fanny can't go without her, and she won't care much for talk when she thinks she's doing right."

I saw the little company off a few hours later, and a sorrowful parting it was, though Miss Letty and Lilian tried hard to assume a courage they did not feel, to comfort Fanny Lester, whose grief was terrible to witness; and how I loved and admired Lilian, when I saw her so forgetful of self, soothing and sustaining the weeping sister, while her own heart was bleeding silently. This young girl was not one to proclaim her sorrow on the house-tops, or to make noisy de-

mands for sympathy. When the iron entered her soul, she would turn away quietly from observation, and pursuing her daily round of duty, pour the tale of her suffering into the ear of Infinite pity alone.

It may be that I am about to betray Miss Letty's confidence; but her letters from Hagerstown were such faithful transcripts of her heart and character, that I cannot resist the temptation to give a few extracts from them to my readers.

"..... I wish I could give you some idea of the hospitals here, but I can't begin to describe them. The rooms look airy and clean enough; but, Oh dear, those long rows of beds, with poor suffering, maimed, dying heroes lying on them, some with faces paler than the sheets, some burning up with fever, and all having such a tired, anxious look, as



if they wanted somebody to comfort them; and, poor fellows, they do need it bad enough, I can tell you. I should have been glad to stop and say a kind word to every one of them, but a nurse hurried me on to a little room beyond the large one, with three or four beds in it, and there, on a cot, I found my boy, looking as white and weak as could be, but just as pleasant as ever.

“He was asleep, and I did n’t want to wake him, so I took a chair very softly, and sat down close by the dear little fellow till his nap was out. The first I knew, the tears were dripping, dripping into my lap just like rain. I’m sure I’d no thought of crying in that place, but there were tears in my heart when I saw that dear little face all drawn up with pain in his sleep, and when I thought about that arm that had been round my neck so often, and never would be any



more. By and by he waked up, and when he saw me sitting there, he gave one shout, and if the sun had been shining right into his eyes, they couldn't have been any brighter. That one look would have paid me for all the journey, if I hadn't done a single thing for him.

“ ‘Oh, aunty,’ says he, ‘I was just dreaming that you had come, and it seemed so good to have you over me once more, and now here you are. I don't know what to say, our Father is so good to me.’

“It was as much as I could do to speak, but I made out to tell him I had come to stay and take care of him till he could go home with me.

“He gave his head a little shake, just as he used to when he wasn't certain about a thing, and said,

“ ‘I don't think much about going to

that home, Aunt Letty ; I 'm a little boy, you know, to have an arm cut off, and mine is n't doing very well, I know from the doctor's looks. But it will all come out right ;' and such a smile as there was on his face. ' And now, dear aunty, give me another kiss, and I 'll turn over and go to sleep again ; and I wish you could too, you look so tired.'

"I told him I was n't tired, and then I shook up his pillow, and he turned over and went right to sleep like the lamb he is.

"All this while there had been a pair of great black eyes watching me ever so wishfully the other side of the room ; so when Willie was asleep, I thought I 'd find out who they belonged to. I went over to the bed, and found a poor young fellow eighteen years old, who looked as if he could n't live twenty-four hours.

"'Is there any thing I can do for you ?'

said I, for I felt awfully to see him lie there looking so pitiful.

“‘O yes, ma’am,’ said he; ‘if you will only speak a few kind words to me, and smooth my hair as you did little Willie’s, it would do me so much good. I thought when I saw you kiss his forehead, if my mother could only come and do that, it would be easier to die.’

“‘Well, my dear boy,’ said I, ‘I a’n’t your mother, nor any of your relation; but I’m a fellow-creature, and I feel for you, and am willing to do any thing I can to make you comfortable.’

“So I got some bay-rum from a nurse, and bathed his hot hands and face, and brushed his hair and smoothed his pillow, and then I gave him just such a kiss as I did Willie, and I a’n’t ashamed to own it. The big tears were in his eyes, and he said,

“‘I did n’t think any thing in the world

could do me so much good. It seems as if mother was here, and I thank you a thousand times.'

"Then I asked him if there was any thing more he wanted, and what do you think he said ?

"'If you could only read a few verses out of my Bible and pray with me, I should be so glad. I'm going to die, and I a'n't afraid to go, but I do want somebody to read and pray with me first.'

"Only think of that ; for me, who never dared to speak loud in any meeting at home, to be asked to pray with a sick man in a hospital ! It was like a blow to me, and for a minute I didn't know what to say ; but there were those eyes looking right through me, and he said softly, 'If you only could.' So I plucked up courage, and said, 'I *will*,' and then I shut to the door and read a chap-

ter in a low voice, just so he could hear me, and tried to ask God to help and comfort the poor boy, for he was nothing more. When I got through, he took hold of my hand, and said, 'I can't thank you for your kindness as I want to, but God will reward you, I'm sure. Take the blessing of a dying man, and remember you have comforted my last hours.'

"I was ashamed to hear him speak so; for after all, what had I done to deserve thanks for?

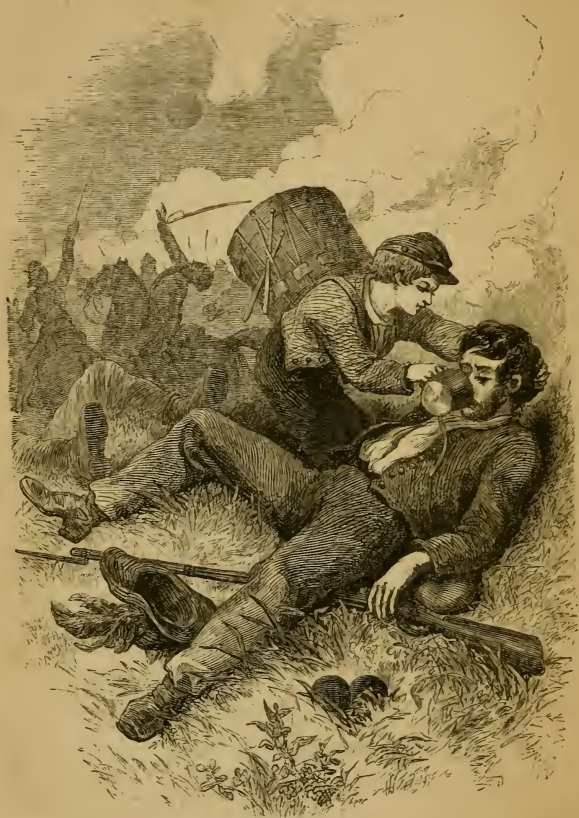
"He died the next day, and I staid by him all I could when Willie did n't need me, and wrote a letter to his mother just as he gave the words to me only an hour or two before he breathed his last. Poor woman! I pitied her, for he was a noble-looking fellow, and one that feared God, and I know a mother must have set a great store by such a son."

In another letter she wrote,

“My little Willie is getting along very slowly, and the doctors look sober about him, and I know they ’re afraid he ’s going into a decline. His mother died of that, and they say the shock to his system has been so great that it may not be able to rally again. But he ’s just as happy as the day is long, and says if he had twenty arms, he ’d be willing to give them all for his country.

“I don’t see much of the captain or Miss Lilian, for he is in another building where the officers are; and he ’s so low, they don’t let anybody visit him unless they have a special permit from the doctor. I believe they have a little more hope of him than they had at first, but Miss Lilian says his life hangs by a single thread. Dear Miss Lilian, she looks tired and pale, but her smile is just as bright as ever, and when she comes to see Willie, it always cheers him up, like







a breath of fresh air or a bunch of flowers."

While Miss Letty was away in Hagerstown, a letter came to the Fenton's from their absent son, who was a prisoner in our lines, and had been severely wounded, bringing the joyful intelligence that he had taken from his heart the oath of allegiance to the dear old flag. As soon as he could travel he would come home for a short visit, and then join the Union army. He told them how he had been left for dead on the field at Williamsburg, and that a little drummer-boy chanced to find him; that he brought him water at the risk of his own life, and finally had him carried from the field by some members of the Twenty-sixth, to which regiment the boy belonged.

While in the hospital there, he said little Willie visited him often at his own

special request, and to the artless conversation of this child he attributed his first convictions of the wrong course he had been pursuing. "It was the last thing he thought of," the letter concluded, "to teach me, whom he regarded as greatly his superior; but his thoughts, so far beyond his years, brought to mind the neglected lessons of my precious mother, and now, if I am like the repenting prodigal, I owe it, under God, to that dear boy, whose heroism is only equalled by the kindness of his heart."

It will be readily believed that the Fentons were enthusiastic in their expressions of love and gratitude to Willie for the signal service he had rendered them, and a letter was sent at once to Miss Letty informing her of the facts, and entreating her to bring the dear invalid to the Tyrrell House immediately on her return.

It was a lovely evening in early autumn when Miss Letty and her charge came back to us, and the first glance at Willie's pale, sweet face told us that his days were numbered. Yet his spirits were so buoyant, his enjoyment of every thing so earnest and child-like, it was hard to believe that he was indeed passing away from earth.

When I first visited him at the Tyrrell House, he was sitting up in an easy-chair in a room overlooking the garden, and with choice flowers all about him. He smiled as I took his hand and inquired after his health, saying,

"I'm quite well, and so happy. I can't think what makes everybody so kind to me. I don't deserve it at all, but God puts it into their hearts, and I thank him for it. If dear Miss Lilian was only here ; but I'm so glad she's with the captain."

“Were you in Captain Lester’s company?” I asked.

“O yes, he got me transferred; and, Mrs. Glenn, I don’t think there’s another man in the world like Captain Lester.”

“In what respect, Willie?”

“In every thing. The men all love him so, they’d give their lives for him; and yet he’s very strict, and wont have any drinking or gambling or swearing in the camp. They have to do just right, and then he’s the kindest man I ever saw. If anybody is sick or in trouble, they know where to go for help; and when the chaplain is away, he prays and reads a sermon to the men in the big tent every Sunday. Oh dear, I do hope he wont die.” And the tears, which no sufferings of his own could call forth, fell fast for those of his beloved captain.

“Willie,” I said, “do you remember any thing about being wounded, and how you felt then?”

“Not much at first. It is all like a confused dream; how we marched all day to get up with the army; how we lay down to escape the shot and shell that the rebs were pouring into us; and at last, how the captain called out to us, ‘Now, boys, is your time!’ and then we went in on the double-quick, till we were in the thickest of it. It seems somehow as if that was years ago; but all at once, when I was beating my drum as hard as I could, I felt as if I was falling down ever so far, and I did n’t know any thing more for a good while.

“When I came to myself, the fighting was over, and the rebs all gone; but I was so weak that I could n’t stir nor speak, and I thought my time had come; but I did n’t feel afraid to die.

“You remember, ma’am, the time of that revival in the Sabbath-school, when several of the children were admitted to the church? I think I gave my heart to the Saviour then; and though Aunt Letty thought I was too young to come forward with them, I have always loved my Bible better than any other book; and when I lay there, I tried to look up to the Lord Jesus, but my eyes were heavy, and would n’t keep open. Then it seemed as if angels were all round me, and I forgot my pain and how much I wanted water, and went to sleep again. The next thing I knew, I was in the hospital, and my arm gone.”

I was affected to tears by this simple recital, and could hardly command my voice to say,

“But, Willie, you have always been very full of life and activity; does it never seem hard to you to lose your arm, and

to be shut up here so sick, and perhaps to die?"

His face flushed, and he looked up in surprise, but soon answered pleasantly,

"Oh, you are only asking that to try me; you could n't mean it in earnest, I'm sure. Why, there never was any boy who had so many blessings as I have. In the first place, it was such goodness in God to let me go out with the regiment, such a poor little fellow as I am. Then when I was hurt, he sent dear Aunt Letty to take care of me, and bring me home here to such a nice place, and such kind friends. It isn't any matter about my arm, for when I die I'll have wings, you know, and so it will never be missed."

Dear young disciple! So early and plainly taught of the blessed Saviour, what could older Christians do but sit at

thy feet and learn wisdom from thy simple, childlike words?

While I still lingered, unable to tear myself away from a scene so peaceful and hallowed, Mrs. Flint came in, and took a seat by his side. Her looks and voice were carefully graduated to suit the occasion as she said,

“I am glad to see you so comfortable, and hope, my dear child, that the chastisement of the Lord is doing you good. Do you feel that this is the case?”

Willie was a brave, happy boy naturally, and religion had added to these traits a firm trust in God as his Father, through Jesus Christ, so he smiled as he answered,

“I don’t know, ma’am; I hope I love the Saviour, and I know he loves me, and he gives me so many blessings I don’t think much about punishment. I don’t feel as if he was angry with me, when he



has died for me, and I want to please him more than any thing else in the world."

"I am afraid, my dear," she replied, "that you do not realize how great a sinner you are, if you think you don't deserve punishment for your sins."

"No indeed, it is n't that," Willie exclaimed, while his cheeks flushed with the excitement of his feelings. But Miss Letty could keep silence no longer, and interrupted him, saying,

"Mrs. Flint, my little Willie can't talk much now, but I think he lives religion better than a great many of us. He means, and I say, that though we don't deserve any thing but punishment for our sins, it is n't always a sign that God is angry with us when he lets us suffer in this world. He was n't angry with Job, when he allowed Satan to try him so; nor with Daniel, when he was put into the lions' den; but he did it to show what

religion could do for people when they are in the worst of troubles. I believe it's just so nowadays; and that God is nearer to us sometimes when every thing seems to go wrong, than he is when it's fair weather and smooth sailing."

"That may be so," replied Mrs. Flint, "but do n't you think there's danger of making the way of religion too easy, so that people will think they are Christians when they are not?"

"I do n't think we have any thing to do with making the way hard or easy. We must take it just as Jesus Christ left it; and he says, 'I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.' I do n't read that any thing but repentance and faith in the Saviour, and renewing by the Holy Spirit, is necessary to be a humble Christian; and I am sure the Saviour never turned away any one who came to him in earnest, and

wanted to be his disciple. But Willie is getting tired, and it wont do to talk any longer."

The visitor departed, leaving the little invalid weary and feverish, until soothed by the gentle ministrations of Miss Letty and Elinor Fenton. Why is it that some individuals, who pass in society for good people, have the unenviable talent of making every one uncomfortable with whom they come in contact? Under all the velvet of their professions, the claws continually lacerate, even while they seem to caress. There are few communities in which some of these specimens of humanity may not be found; and it is sad when they wear the garb of religion, and pretend to be holier than others, while doing the work of him who has sought from the beginning to foment strife and jealousy among brethren.

During the fall, Willie had several at-

tacks of hemorrhage of the lungs, which rapidly wasted his strength; but he was still the same happy, trusting, loving boy, enjoying life with all a boy's enthusiasm, yet welcoming death with perfect serenity.

On one of the last days of the Indian summer, when a golden haze lay on every thing, softening the landscape and giving to autumn more than the beauty of spring, I was called to see Willie die. I found him sitting up in bed, gasping for breath, and his forehead damp with the death-dew; but his eye was still clear, and on his lips was a smile bright with heaven's own radiance. "Dear Willie," I said, "you are almost home."

"O yes, I like this home very much, but that one is better. I am where Christian was when he began to cross the river, and in a little while I shall be over."

Bunyan's inimitable allegory was his favorite book, and he had it almost by heart. While in camp it had been his greatest pleasure to repeat portions of it to the listening soldiers, by whom "Willie's stories" were preferred to any other. And now on his dying-bed the pilgrim was to him a living friend who had crossed the stream just before him, and whom he was about to join in the Celestial City.

"Willie," said Mr. Ryder, "have you no wish to live?"

"To live!" he repeated with animation; "why, don't you know I am just going to live? Oh, if you could only see what I see, such beautiful angels with shining wings, and hear the sweet music, you would be willing to die too, so that you could go and live with them."

The eloquence of look and tone with which this was said is indescribable. He lay quietly for a few moments with closed

eyes, then suddenly turning to Miss Letty, who was weeping, he said,

“Dear aunty, you told me of Jesus, and taught me how to seek him, and now I am going to live with him for ever. Perhaps he will let me fly down to you sometimes, and whisper to you about heaven when you are sorrowful; I should love to so much. If I could only have seen the captain and Miss Lilian once more; but no matter, they’ll come, you’ll all come home by and by.”

His voice failed, and he seemed almost gone, when raising his hand, he whispered,

“They are all coming; mother; it is light, all light;” and then with one long tremulous sigh, the ransomed spirit fled, leaving the impress of its happiness.

We buried him in a quiet spot, selected by himself near his childhood’s home, and a plain marble slab, with the inscrip-

tion, "OUR WILLIE," marks his resting-place. His drum, a beautiful and richly ornamented one given him by his regiment after the battle of Malvern Hills, and which he kept constantly near him through all his illness, was enclosed in a glass case, and placed at the head of his grave. We shall see him no more on earth, but the memory of the little drummer-boy is still cherished in the hearts of many who loved him here, and who hope to meet him in the better land where "sorrow and parting are sounds unknown."

## CHAPTER V.

## HOW THE BOYS CAME HOME.

CAPT. LESTER was carried from the field of Antietam insensible, and on examination his wounds were pronounced mortal by the physicians, though no means were left untried to preserve a life so valuable to his country. A minié ball had passed through his shoulder to the back of the neck, and at the same time the fragment of a shell struck his ankle, inflicting a severe wound, and splintering the bone. He lay for several days in a half-unconscious state—at times, when partially roused, becoming delirious, then sinking again into a lethargy from which it was difficult to awaken him. A private house had been hastily fitted up for the reception of the wounded, and to this



he was taken and made as comfortable as circumstances admitted.

When Fanny Lester and Lilian reached the end of their journey, they were at first denied admittance to the hospital; and it was only after the most strenuous exertions on the part of Mr. Ryder that they were allowed to see Capt. Lester.

“I am afraid, my dear young friends,” said the good man, “that you will not be permitted to remain with him; the military rules are very strict, and few favors are shown here.”

“Have no fears on that score, my dear sir,” Lilian replied. “If once we gain entrance, it will take at least a regiment to dislodge us.”

It was evening when they entered the room where the sick man lay, seemingly insensible to every thing around him; and as Lilian approached, the nurse who had been moistening his lips from time

to time, came forward, and greeting her kindly, offered her a seat by his side. Though terribly shocked at his death-like appearance, Lilian was outwardly calm; and taking from the nurse minute directions with regard to the treatment to be pursued, busied herself in arranging the dressings and medicines, to conceal the emotion which threatened to overpower her.

When this was done, she seated herself by the bedside, and taking the hand of the wounded man, placed her fingers on his wrist to assure herself that he still lived, for in that darkened room his sleep so closely resembled death, that her heart stood still with terror as she looked upon him. Hardly had she touched his wrist when a perceptible thrill ran through the veins; there was a slight movement, and then a faint voice whispered, "Is this Lilian?"

Too much agitated to reply at once, she gave him the stimulant prescribed by the nurse, turned up the lamp that she might see his face, and then said as calmly as she could,

“Yes, Robert, it is your sister and Lilian, who have come to nurse and make you well.”

“Thank God!” was the low response; and then he seemed to sleep again, while Lilian watched him through the night, glad to find that her young companion had forgotten her sorrows in refreshing slumber. From that time Capt. Lester’s symptoms were slightly improved, and he had more frequent intervals of consciousness, though there were yet but faint hopes of his recovery. If medical skill and the most assiduous care could save him, he was certain to recover, for Lilian or Fanny were with him night and day, anticipating every want, and

soothing by their tender sympathy the sufferings which no skill could wholly relieve.

For some weeks it was feared by the surgeons that amputation of the foot must take place; and nothing but the prayers and tears of Lilian induced them to delay it, until, by the blessing of God on her exertions, it was no longer deemed necessary. The ball still remained in his shoulder, and had hitherto eluded search; but it was at length found and extracted; and from that hour his progress, though slow, was sure.

“How is it, Robert,” said Lilian one day, when he was suffering more than usual from his wounds, “that you are always so cheerful and patient, though you suffer so much? I have heard that convalescents are expected to be irritable and capricious, but you do not avail yourself of the privilege at all. You

must be naturally indifferent to pain, or else you have too much pride to allow it to overcome you; which is it?"

"Neither the one nor the other, dear Lilian. I have naturally a great dread of pain, and do not think myself possessed of a large share of that moral courage in which your sex excel, and which is the only kind which will bear the test of suffering. As to pride, it is sadly out of place on a sick-bed, even if it had the power to deaden a sense of pain, which I very much doubt."

"What is it then that makes you so desirable a patient? for, excepting my aunt, I never saw any one bear pain as you do."

"Shall I tell you, my Lilian? It is the taking home to my heart, and appropriating that precious promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' In myself I am all weakness; but if an almighty arm

is underneath and around me, I have all the strength and support I need. God grant that you may know from your own experience the blessedness of which I speak."

Tears were in the eyes of Lilian as she answered,

"With such examples as I have had before me, I can never doubt the reality of the religion of Jesus, and I would give worlds, if I had them, to feel its power; but it seems impossible for me to obtain such a blessing."

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," was the reply. "And now, dear Lilian, I must send you from me to visit our poor patient up stairs, who needs you even more than I do, if that were possible."

A few days previous to this conversation, Lilian was passing through one of the rooms in which lay some rebel offi-

cers who had been recently brought in from Virginia. Most of them were hopeless cases, and the sight was so painful to the young girl, that she passed on rapidly, until her steps were arrested by the exclamation, "Miss Grey! can it be possible?" She turned and saw, though she could hardly recognize in the pallid face and emaciated form before her, Lieut. Carter, the betrothed of her cousin, the rebel officer whose desertion of his country's flag had caused them all so much unhappiness. It was a very painful meeting to Lilian, and her first impulse was to leave the room instantly; but death was stamped on every feature of the young man, and humanity triumphed. She approached the bedside, and said kindly,

"Mr. Carter, I can stay but a moment. Is there any thing I can do for you, or that you wish to say to me?"



The sick man replied bitterly,

“I see how it is; you all hate and despise me; but I cannot help it. I am a Southerner, and would not desert my brethren in arms though I lost every friend on earth. What I have done I would do again in the same circumstances.”

“You are wrong, Hugh,” said Lilian, “none of us hate or despise you, though the course you have taken has almost broken the hearts of those who loved you so dearly.”

“And who love me no longer, you would say. Well, I knew the penalty when I put on this uniform, and I am not going now to complain of the cost. I hate the Yankees,” he exclaimed with an energy of which he seemed incapable, “and the bitterest thought in dying is, that Elinor has become one of their miserable canting crew; but they have lost



Stanwood; he at least is true to the bonny blue flag."

"Not so, Hugh. Stanwood has seen his error, and taken the oath of allegiance at Washington, and only waits until his wounds are healed to go home and be reconciled to his family."

The sick man turned ghastly pale on hearing this, and an execration rose to his lips, which was suppressed from deference to Lilian, who added,

"You are very ill, Hugh, and thoughts like these are not suited to one in your condition. Let me beg you to see the chaplain; he is a good man, and will gladly visit you."

"Oh spare me all that stereotyped nonsense," he exclaimed. "I will die as I have lived, without the aid of priest or chaplain. If my belief is correct, I do not need them; and if I am wrong, it is too late to mend the mistake. I am dy-

ing, and you know it; but I will at least die game: no whining repentance or hypocritical confessions for Hugh Carter."

There seemed little hope of doing him any good in such a state of mind, and Lilian, feeling her own incompetency to reply to him, sadly turned away and left the room, while memory went back to other days, when he who was going into eternity without one ray of light upon his path, had been to her almost a brother. There was a shadow on her bright face as she went back to her patient, who instantly saw it, and inquired the cause, when she related the scene through which she had just passed. Capt. Lester had formerly known Lieut. Carter, and though no bond of affinity had ever drawn the young men together, he was greatly shocked to learn his present condition.

"I must see him, dear Lilian," he said;

“he may listen to me when he would not admit a clergyman. It is too dreadful to let him die so, without making one effort to do him good. Poor Elinor, how could she bear this?”

With great difficulty, and on crutches, Capt. Lester made his way to the bedside of the wounded officer; but the latter refused to converse with him, declaring that his mind was made up, and he would never be such a coward as to change his opinions because death was at hand. In vain he was urged to listen to God's own words of promise.

“To those who can believe, all that is well enough; as for me, I have never feared any thing in life, and cannot begin to tremble now.”

A few days afterwards he died in the same state of mind, declaring with his latest breath that he asked no favors at the hands of God or man.

Elinor was informed of his death, but not of the circumstances attending it; and thus she was spared the keenest pang of all—that of knowing that he whom she had once loved and trusted, died without hope.

One after another our brave boys came back to us from the hospitals, wounded and disabled, some maimed for life, yet bating no tittle of courage or faith in the ultimate triumph of the good cause. A part of the regiment had reënlisted at the expiration of their term of service, and were with us for a few days, enjoying the sweets of domestic life after their laborious campaigns.

It was during their stay that the death of little Willie occurred, and the drummer-boy was followed to his grave by many of those who knew and loved him as a son or brother in the camp. There were manly tears shed around his grave ;

and one man exclaimed, as the coffin was lowered from sight,

“There goes the best boy I ever knew, and I don’t believe he has left his like behind him.”

The first snows of winter had fallen on Willie’s grave before Capt. Lester came back to us, with his sister and a lady whom we had loved as Lilian Grey, but were now to know as Mrs. Lester. She was well aware that the prejudices of her uncle and cousin would be shocked by her marriage away from home and in a hospital; so she said nothing about it in her letters, believing that her husband could plead his own cause far better in person than she could do by writing. The event justified her expectations; for though at first Mr. Fenton was surprised and angry, the reasons given by Capt. Lester and the persuasions of his wife soon reconciled him, and even forced him

to confess that it was probably the best thing that could have been done under the circumstances. Mrs. Fenton, however, would not consent to part with her niece; so Capt. Lester became an inmate of the family, and soon won the affection of all its members, while his health improved rapidly, though the wound in his ankle was still painful and troublesome.

Soon after Capt. Lester's return, there came a visitor to the parsonage whose arrival was warmly welcomed by Mabel, though it caused her tears to flow afresh. This was the father of Lieut. Wiley, who had taken the journey for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the bride of his son, now doubly endeared to him by her early widowhood and sorrow.

He was a plain New England farmer, cultivating a few acres of hard soil, from which he managed by unceasing industry to gain a support for his small fam-

ily; but he was rich in faith, and his benevolence would shame that of many a millionaire. His son had left home while still very young; but he was fondly remembered, and his loss lamented by the aged pair, who had only one daughter left to be the stay of their declining years.

Mr. Wiley went from house to house through the Beach Hill neighborhood, wherever a disabled soldier or a bereaved wife or mother were to be found, often accompanied by Mabel, who in her mourning garb looked so pale and shadowy that we almost expected to see her vanish from our sight. The old man loved to hear and talk of his dead son; but he loved still more to speak of Him who died for sinners, and of the heaven to which his disciples are hastening. It was impossible on such occasions for the most careless to listen unmoved; and tears were often seen to steal down the



cheeks of bearded men, though all "unused to the melting mood," as they heard from his lips the story so often told, yet ever new, of Gethsemane and Calvary.

The visit of Mr. Wiley was a blessing to many souls in Woodbury, and especially to Mabel and Lilian, both of whom made a public profession of faith in Christ the Sabbath before his departure. When he left for home, Mabel and her mother went with him, as our physician recommended a change of scene for the former, whose health was suffering from the shock she had sustained.

Capt. Lester had now so far recovered as to walk with only the assistance of a cane, when, one evening after Lilian had been spending the day with me, he came in bringing a large package, which he threw into her lap, saying, "Read that, dear wife, and then tell me what to do."

She opened the envelope and found



inclosed a commission as colonel of a veteran regiment then being raised, with a letter in which flattering mention was made of Capt. Lester's services in the army, and the estimation in which he was held by the chief magistrate of the state.

Lilian's eyes sparkled with all a wife's pride as she read the letter, and turning to her husband, she said, "There ought to be but one cause for hesitation on such a subject. If you are well enough to go, you cannot doubt for a moment your duty to accept it. I would not hold you back, if I could, and I am certain that I could not, if I would."

"Thanks, dear Lilian; I knew your brave and true heart would cheer me on in the path of duty; but I have been a petted invalid so long, that I am ashamed to say the thought of leaving all I love was at first painful to me."

“And may I not go with you?” she inquired; “you know how well I can bear hardships; and I assure you I will take care that you shall find me no incumbrance.”

“That you could never be, in any case,” was his reply; “but the coming campaign is likely to be a fatiguing and perilous one, and besides, I must not set an example of self-indulgence to the regiment. It would never do for the colonel to be enjoying the society of his wife, unless he grants the same privilege to the other officers, and in that case, I fear we should be in danger of losing the name of the ‘fighting regiment,’ which the veterans have so nobly earned.”

“I submit, as in duty bound, to your decision; but I must have a promise that I may come to you instantly, if at any time you should need me.”

The promise was readily given, and

Lilian smiled through her tears as she playfully pictured his helplessness, when he should find himself thrown once more on his own resources.

“I know you have almost spoiled me,” he replied in the same tone, “but the camp is a good school in which to learn to endure hardships and self-denial, and I am not likely to want for lessons in our present service.”

Several members of the Twenty-sixth, when they found that Capt. Lester was to have the command of a regiment, were transferred, and most of his field and line officers were old friends and comrades, so we bade him farewell cheerfully, though his health was not fully re-established.

True to her former professions, Lilian sent him forth with smiles and blessings ; and after his departure, she had always a word of comfort and cheer for those

who had given their household treasures to the cause of freedom. But the few who knew her intimately, knew that she shed bitter tears when no eye but that of God was upon her, as she thought of the perils by which he was surrounded, and which he had neither the power nor the wish to shun.

The regiment commanded by Col. Lester was in the second division of the Sixth corps in the Army of the Potomac, and was stationed near the enemy's outposts, so that picket-firing and skirmishing were of daily occurrence, though there had been no general engagement since the battle of Gettysburg.

That grand Army of the Potomac; how my heart thrills as I think or write of it! Composed, as no other army on earth ever was made up, save our own noble troops of the West and South-west, of the very flower of American manhood,

with youth, wealth, intellect, and talent filling its ranks, and yet, by a strange fatality, doomed to experience unmerited defeats or fruitless victories, it has waited with a courage and patience truly sublime for the moment of triumph which is sure to come at last. So often decimated, yet never subdued, but Antæus-like, gathering fresh vigor from every disaster, they have not always been able to command success, but they have done more; for they have deserved it. In the coming time, when this fearful war shall have passed into history, and our children are reaping its glorious results, it will be a prouder boast than that of royal lineage to have the right to say, "My father was a soldier in the Army of the Potomac."

## CHAPTER VI.

## LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

I HAD been absent from home for several weeks, and after my return, sickness in the family confined me closely, so that I knew little of what had been occurring in the neighborhood. Miss Letty, through whom my information usually came, was seldom seen abroad, to the great surprise and inconvenience of many families who had learned to look upon her frequent visits as an indispensable part of their domestic arrangements.

“What has happened to Miss Letty?” I inquired of Lilian Lester, at a meeting of our Aid Society, as I noticed the look of gravity which seemed strangely out of place on her countenance, usually so cheerful.

“I am not aware of any cause for it,” Lilian replied, “and yet she certainly does look as if she were carrying a weight of care. Dear Miss Letty, I hope nothing has happened to trouble her, for she is so kind and unselfish that she ought to be very happy.”

As I left the house, Miss Letty came up, and proposed to accompany me home, an offer which I gladly accepted, for it was evident that there was something she wished to communicate, and I hoped, by sharing her anxieties, to alleviate them. We walked for a few steps in silence, and then my companion, in an embarrassed tone, very different from her ordinary manner, inquired,

“Mrs. Glenn, have you ever seen Mr. Thurston when he has been here preaching for Mr. Ryder?”

“Mr. Thurston,” I repeated; “is he the home missionary stationed at M——,

among the mountains? If so, I have seen him, and heard him preach; but why do you ask that question?"

Strange to say, I had not a suspicion of the state of affairs, notwithstanding the confusion of my companion, for I had never heard of the death of Mr. Thurston's wife, and therefore was not likely to think of him in connection with Miss Letty.

"Why," she said, "I only wanted to know whether you had ever seen him, and how you liked him, if you had; for you see he has been over here several times lately, and called on me with Mr. Ryder, and—pshaw, how silly I am—well, he has asked me to marry him."

Miss Letty actually blushed like a young girl as she made this confession, which took me so utterly by surprise, that for a moment I had not a word to say.



“I see you are astonished at it, and no wonder; I told him that everybody would wonder that he should offer himself to me, a seamstress, and without one cent of money in the world; but he only smiled, and said he wanted a wife for himself, and not to suit the public; that he did n’t want a young girl, nor a rich wife either, to look down on him and his poor people.”

“You are mistaken,” I replied; “it is n’t that which surprised me, but I had never heard that he was a widower; and then the thought of losing you is something so new, and not very pleasant, I assure you. What shall we do without you?”

“I thought of that,” was the reply, for Miss Letty had too much simplicity of character to pretend to be ignorant of her importance in the community, though she was truly humble in her estimate of

herself; "and I told Mr. Thurston I had been here so long, and had got so into the habit of doing every thing for everybody, that I was afraid they 'd miss me a good deal. But he said if that was the case, I was just the one for a poor minister, who had to contrive to make ends meet, and that his children needed me more than the folks in Woodbury did. You see he just brushed away all my objections like so many cobwebs, so that I could n't say another word."

"I am glad he seems to appreciate your worth; if we must give you up, it will be a comfort to know that you are happy."

"Oh, as to that I do n't know; I suppose people at my age have n't very romantic notions of happiness; I'm sure I have n't; but if I can do any good to one of the Lord's servants, I shall be glad. But when I think how much will be ex-

pected of me, I am so frightened I feel like giving it all right up. You see, when I was a child they did n't care much about education in our town, and though I've picked up some ideas here and there going through the world, I don't know very much. Then I'm plain and homely in my ways, and I'm afraid he'll be ashamed of me some time when he sees me by the side of other ministers' wives; but when I told him so he only laughed, and said if that was all my difficulty, he should look on it as settled; so I had to say yes, for he would n't hear to any thing else."

I said every thing in my power to encourage Miss Letty, for I felt that Mr. Thurston had made a wise choice for himself and his children, and that our little seamstress, with her fund of good sense, energy, and activity, and above all, with her unwavering trust in God, would make a far better wife for a clergyman than

many an educated and refined woman who was deficient in these qualities, as too many are.

“And how soon are we to lose you?” I inquired; “I trust not immediately; you must give us a little time to become reconciled to the thought of such a change.”

“Mr. Thurston is very anxious that I should go right away; he says he has been alone so long, and his children need me so much; but I told him I must see to the work I had on hand, so as to leave you all comfortable, or I should n’t be easy in my mind about going. It’s hard to leave such friends as I have got here, and to go away from dear little Willie’s grave too; but Mr. Ryder seems to think it is my duty to go, because there are so few that would be willing to take such a place. I don’t see how that can be, for I’m sure Mr. Thurston is one of the best

of men, and I think any woman might be happy with him."

From the earnestness with which this was said, I saw that Miss Letty was really interested in the good minister, and not about to sacrifice herself from a sense of duty merely; and I was glad to believe this, for I feared she might not be as comfortable under her new responsibilities as she had been in Woodbury.

The wedding took place in church; and after an hour or two spent at the parsonage, where the friends of the bride called to offer their congratulations and to bid her good-by, the happy pair left for their mountain home, from whence we have repeatedly heard of the new Mrs. Thurston, as useful and beloved beyond any of her predecessors in that place.

Mrs. Fenton had been for months rapidly failing, and her symptoms were now

such as to indicate a speedy release from her sufferings. She was intensely anxious to see her long-absent son once more on earth, and this strong maternal feeling seemed actually to hold back the spirit, already pluming its wings for flight. "I shall not die till I have seen him again," was her constant reply to the inquiries of her friends. "He will come in time to receive my parting breath, and I am content."

Stanwood Fenton had never recovered from the wound received at South Mountain, and after months of terrible agony, had recently been obliged to submit to amputation of the hand as the only means of saving his life. He was now recovering slowly, and had been sent to the convalescent camp, when a letter from Elinor informed him of the condition of his mother. In spite of the remonstrances of his physicians he obtained, through

the influence of Col. Lester, a dismissal from the camp, and started for home under the care of Capt. May, a former member of the Twenty-sixth, and now commander of a company in Col. Lester's regiment, who had a furlough in consequence of ill health.

Mrs. Fenton had seemed to be in a dying state for several hours, but her frequent inquiries showed us that she still expected the arrival of her son, though no word had reached her of his intention to start for home.

"It is my only earthly care," she said, "and I think my Father will grant me this request."

She had been apparently sleeping; and all was perfectly still in and around the house, when suddenly starting and opening her eyes, she exclaimed, "He is coming; I hear the wheels; he is almost here; thank God."



None of us could hear a sound ; but the mother's ears, quickened by affection, caught the distant rumbling, though the moment before death seemed about to close them for ever. A few moments brought the carriage to the door, and Elinor and Lilian flew to meet and welcome the returning wanderer.

“Is my mother still living?” was his first inquiry ; and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, the strength which had sustained him on the way suddenly deserted him. He sank into a chair, and covering his face, gave way for a few moments to the emotions which shook his frame, while Elinor threw her arms around his neck, and wept silently. But Lilian, who knew the anxiety of her dying aunt, said tenderly,

“Dear cousin, this will never do. Think of your mother, whose life is now counted by moments, and who is waiting



for you. All your strength will be needed for this interview, and you must be calm, since agitation might be instantly fatal to her."

"I know it," was his reply, "and you shall see me a man again soon; but I have feared the worst all the way home, and the revulsion of feeling overcame me at first. May you never know, dear girls, what it is to have remorse added to the sorrow of such an hour as this."

The interview between the dying mother and her erring, but penitent son, was witnessed only by members of the family; and at its close, she was so exhausted as to be almost insensible. But the lamp of life burned up brightly once more before going out for ever. She bade us all farewell, with a few tender and appropriate words to each; then turning to her son, who was kneeling at the bedside, with his face buried in the pillows, she said,

as she laid her cold hand upon his head, "My dear boy, I once asked for you in my blindness length of days and temporal prosperity. Now I trust I have sought better things of God for you; but you must seek him for yourself, or you will never see his face in peace. With my dying breath I charge you, make it the business of your life to meet me in heaven."

After a few loving words to her husband, Elinor, and Lilian, with a kind message to Col. Lester, she said, in a voice clear and distinct as in health,

"I wish to give it as my dying testimony to all here present, that not one good thing has ever failed in my experience, of all that the Lord has spoken. The religion of the Bible has been to me an infinite blessing. I have lived on it for years, and it has supported me in suffering and sorrow, and now I am dying in perfect peace; for Jesus is with

me, and his rod and staff, they comfort me."

Her voice died away, but the smile on her countenance was like the dawn of heaven in its brightness; and it may have been the reflection of that radiance, for before her words had ceased to echo in that hushed chamber, the spirit had escaped from its wasted tenement, and was already rejoicing before the throne of God.

Col. Lester came home to see her buried, but stayed only a few days, as active service was soon expected. He was in good health, and seemed very happy, and as Lilian was to return with him to Washington, there was nothing to mar her enjoyment of his brief visit. After their departure, Elinor and her brother were very lonely, and Capt. May, whose leave of absence had been extended, was a frequent visitor at the Tyrrell House, and

a great favorite with all its inmates, from Mr. Fenton down to Mammy Venus, and Pete recently promoted to the dignity of coachman.

To know Elinor Fenton intimately was to love her, and the young soldier found, before he had dreamed of danger, that his heart was no longer in his own possession. He could not with propriety make known his feelings to Elinor so soon after her bereavement, but from his friend Stanwood he received all the encouragement which a brother's best wishes could give; and when he rejoined his regiment, he carried with him a hope which brightened his darkest hours, and made every hardship seem light.

Young Fenton had been at home but a few months before he became a universal favorite, as we discovered the acquisition we had made in his society. He was ardent, impulsive, and generous even

to a fault, and possessed the best traits of Southern character, with an ingenuous frankness peculiarly his own. Often led astray by the warmth of his feelings, he was quick to perceive and retract his errors, and eager to make reparation for them. It was impossible to associate with Stanwood Fenton without being constantly reminded of the Saviour's remark to the young man who came to him, and who awoke so deep an interest in his benevolent heart: "One thing thou lackest." Deep religious principle was the one thing wanting in his character, the balance-wheel without which his movements were erratic and uncertain, guided rather by the impulse of the moment than by any sense of accountability to God.

His original plan had been to enter the Union army as soon as possible after the death of his mother, but his health had

suffered greatly from long confinement in the hospital; and the loss of his hand, together with the entreaties of his father and sister, induced him to relinquish the idea, and devote himself to the care of his father's business, which had suffered from neglect. The light came back to Elinor's eye, and the bloom to her cheek, as she saw her brother once more in his proper place at home; and though her beloved mother was still fondly remembered and her loss deplored, it was with a chastened sorrow, as she felt that for her to die had been great gain.

Winter, with its storms and sunshine, its triumphs and reverses, wore away at length, and with the first blossoms of May Lilian came back to us, more welcome to our hearts than the breath of spring or the fragrance of forest flowers. She was accompanied by Captain, now Major May, who was on the staff of Gen.

Lester, and who eagerly availed himself of an opportunity to revisit the spot where his earthly hopes were centred. During her stay at the head-quarters of her husband, Lilian had learned to appreciate the worth of the young *aide-de-camp*, and ardently hoped he might be successful in his suit. Why should I narrate the progress of events? It was the same old story repeated once again, a tale as old as the history of the race, yet new in the experience of every human heart—the story of faithful love meeting its reward at last in the affection of the beloved object. As Elinor heard from her cousin the recital of the gallant exploits of Major May, of his courage and devoted loyalty, she loved him not only “for the perils he had passed,” but for the high principle which had thus far shielded him from the peculiar temptations of a soldier’s life; and before his



departure he won from her a promise, that when the war was ended, or his term of service expired, he might claim his reward.

Months have passed, and still the cloud of war overshadows the land, and still our beloved ones are absent from us, some with the heroic Sherman in Northern Georgia, scaling the heights of Kenesaw and Lookout mountains, and driving the eagle from his eyrie, as they plant the stars and stripes among the clouds; some are in the sultry swamps and bayous of Louisiana, exposed to a foe more insidious and deadly than the rebel armies; and others, among whom are our best and bravest, are swelling the ranks which threaten the Confederate capital.

“The time has come when brothers must fight  
And sisters must pray at home.”

But while we look up to Him who alone can send help and deliverance, it



is our privilege to labor as well as to pray, and while we wait upon God, to watch for every opportunity of doing whatever our hands find to do in the good cause, with our whole heart.

The heavens are dark above us, and the earth rocks wildly under our feet, but God has a divine purpose underlying all these convulsions, and it is fixed and immutable as his throne. Faith sees in the overturnings around us the majestic march of his providence, preparing a way in the tempest, and making the wrath of man to praise him, while he restrains the remainder thereof.

It is good for us sometimes, when hope deferred makes the heart sick, to go back to first principles, that we may gather strength from a review of our past history and of God's dealings with us as a nation.

The American republic was unique in its inception and establishment. The

pilgrim band who came to New England in the Mayflower were not a company of commercial adventurers, led hither by the hope of gain ; still less were they a party of military freebooters, actuated by the lust of conquest, like the Spaniards, who carried fire and sword among the unoffending inhabitants of Southern America. The principle which led those noble men and women to forsake kindred and home, and to brave the perils of a howling wilderness, and which sustained them amid all their privations and sufferings, was not earthly or perishable. It was the burning, quenchless thirst for religious liberty, the strong determination to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, though the roof of their temple were the boundless sky and their altar the rough stones of the forest, that actuated the founders of this republic in their sublime enterprise.

They came to these wilds of nature that they might found a colony and build up a church, and advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and serve as stepping-stones to others in the great work of human progress. And never has the divine declaration, "Them that honor me I will honor," been more signally fulfilled than in the growth of the infant nation thus established. Every step of the way in which, as a people, we have been led, from the landing on Plymouth rock to the proud position which we have hitherto occupied among the nations, has been marked by special interpositions of Providence, no less real, though less miraculous, than the pillar of cloud and flame which guided the ancient Israelites to the land of promise.

But in our prosperity we have forgotten the Rock whence we were hewn, and have rebelled against our father's God,

and refused to obey his commands, until in his righteous indignation he has come out in judgment against us, and left us to our own ways and to eat the fruit of our own devices. As a nation we have deeply sinned. As a nation we are suffering a fearful punishment.

But let not the enemies of liberty in the old world or the new, exult in the belief that the republic is about to be rent in fragments, and the last hope of the oppressed millions of Europe to be for ever entombed. We are bearing the indignation of the Lord because we have sinned against him; but when his purposes concerning us are accomplished, he will arise to execute judgment for us.

No careful observer of God's providence can doubt that he has reserved America for a grand destiny—that our country has a mission to perform of the

sublimest import, and a grand agency to exert in the regeneration of the world.

If we read aright the divine purpose in reference to this nation, and the historical causes here concentrating, we must believe that the vital forces inherent in our government and institutions will, with the blessing of God, master all the antagonisms now threatening their overthrow; and that, having passed through this baptism of blood and fire, we shall emerge cleansed and purified, and stand as a beacon light to the struggling nations of the old world, until suffering humanity everywhere, regenerated and redeemed, shall rejoice in one grand jubilee of liberty, Christianity, and universal brotherhood.

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